

About the archive:

Kurdish spoken texts recorded by David MacKenzie in the mid 1950's in Iraqi Kurdistan

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David Neil MacKenzie (1926-2001) was a British-born linguist and professor of Iranian Studies at the University of Göttingen. Among his numerous contributions to Iranian linguistics, his two-volume documentation and analysis of varieties of Kurdish spoken in Iraqi Kurdistan stands out as a milestone in Kurdish linguistics (*Kurdish dialect studies, Vol. I-II*. 1961 & 1962, Oxford University Press, abbreviated here as KDS). It was based on extensive field work with Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan, undertaken in the 1950's. A substantial corpus of his recordings were transcribed, translated, and published as volume II of KDS (1962). However, the recordings themselves have never been made available until now.

In 2003, a box of magnetic tapes was entrusted to me by Ludwig Paul, as part of David MacKenzie's legacy from his time as professor in Göttingen. The original material consisted of a box containing 10 magnetic tapes, and 2 cassettes, each C90. I subsequently assigned each tape a number, 1-10 for the reel tapes (reel 10 later turned out to be empty, thus not included below), and 11 and 12 for the cassettes. It was clear that most of the material was from KDS.

From all tapes, a digital copy (wav-file) was produced using the facilities of the phonetics lab at the University of Kiel. The reel tapes had been recorded in two tracks, so for each reel tape two sides were digitalized, A and B, and the corresponding files named 5A, 5B etc. No editing has been undertaken; the aim was to create a digital backup of the originals as soon as possible to avoid further deterioration of the magnetic tapes. Tapes were digitalized onto a mono wave file using Cool Edit (sampling rate 44100, 16 Bit resolution).

The two cassettes (11 and 12) only contained copies of (some of) the magnetic tapes, presumably as backups which would have been made at some time after the recordings when cassettes had become available. However, the sound quality of the cassettes is inferior to the original magnetic reels, so these files are not included in the deposit.

Content

The tapes contain mostly folkloric and oral history, with some scattered poetry, recorded by MacKenzie in the mid-1950's during his fieldwork in Iraqi Kurdistan, primarily of Central Kurdish (CK), aka Sorani, and some Northern Kurdish, Badini dialect. The sound quality is somewhat uneven and not sufficient for finer-grained investigations of phonology, but the content is still readily recoverable.

Several of the recordings correspond to the transcribed and translated texts published in KDS II (1962). Where possible, page numbers and paragraphs corresponding to the published version are provided in the metadata overview below. Unfortunately, only a small selection of the rich narratives contained in KDS II (1962) is contained in these tapes. On the other hand, the tapes include some passages that were not transcribed in the book; see comments column below. Thus although this selection is far from a complete audio record of MacKenzie's published texts, it nevertheless serves as an invaluable supplement to his pioneering documentation of spoken Kurdish, and we are extremely fortunate that, after 70 years, any of the original recordings have survived at all. It is now evident that MacKenzie undertook some light editing of the published transcriptions (removal of repetitions, interruptions etc. in the recordings); the full extent of this awaits more detailed research. But on the whole, the published transcriptions follow the recordings faithfully. A summary of the tapes and the corresponding files, with some comments, is given in the following table, I am very grateful to Parwin Mahmudveysi for assistance in identifying some of the texts.

Archive structure

The archive contains:

- 17 sound files each in two versions, .wav and .mp3 (see Table below for content)
- this document
- a pdf of MacKenzie, David (1962) *Kurdish dialect studies*, Vol. II. Oxford University Press.

Overview of recordings; transcriptions follow KDS II(1962); CK=Central Kurdish, NK=Northern Kurdish

#.wav	variety	§; pp. KDS II	min:sec	comments
1A	CK, Wārmāwa	208; 92-106	15:41	Story <i>Bēžin û Manîja</i>
1B	CK, Wārmāwa	239; 106-120	16:56	Speaker1 up to 06:03. From 6:29 speaker2 recounts <i>Maḥmû w Sîmanswâr</i> , which finishes abruptly in §272.
2A	CK, Wārmāwa	274;120-132	16:31	continues 1B; transcribed version finishes at 11:14. Remaining 5 mins. is a story not included in KDS II
2B	CK, Wārmāwa	188; 82-92	15:25	Oral history, slow speech, good recording
3A	CK, Bingird/Piždar	314; 142-156	16:47	Story <i>Arsalân la mamlakatî Farangîân</i> , cuts off at §350. Volume fades sporadically
3B	CK, Arbil...Rewandiz	420; 190-200	14:06	Story <i>Yisif û Zilaxâ</i> , first part missing. Some feedback for first 6 mins.
4A	CK, Arbil...Rewandiz	473; 212-224	16:18	Story <i>hikāyatakî 'Usmānî binî 'Afān</i> .
4B	NK, Akre	682; 308-316	14:42	Story <i>Kičā ḥākimî</i> , finishes 13:30; description of Akre. Poor quality, background noise
5A	NK, Amadiye Barwārî žōr	713; 330-344	17:00	Speaker1: description of Amadiye to 08:15. From 08:38 Speaker 2 oral history <i>Bāpîrē ma</i> (§726-728). From 10:25 Speaker 3 <i>Aḥmad čalabî ô Bahram Fēris</i> not complete (§729-741)
5B	NK, Amadiye Barwārî žōr; Gullî and Zakho	741; 342-362	17:03	Speaker1= Speaker3 in 5A. At 03:22, the transcription in KDS II ends at §748, but the speaker's narration continues to 07:42. Speaker2+3: From 07:44: descriptions of Zakho (§771-783).
6A	CK, Suleimaniye	169; 68-78	16:31	Dialogue between pupil (A) and ex-teacher (B); some utterances of A are not transcribed. The published transcription finishes at 14:58 (§187); the remaining 30 seconds contains a few verses (not transcribed)
6B	CK, Suleimaniye	1; 4-14	16:51	Story <i>Šā Ismā 'îl û Qambartā</i> , recording stops at §29
7A	NK, Amadiye Barwārî žōr	713; 330-334	08:19	Copy of first 8 mins. of 5A
7B	NK, Akre	682; 308-316	14:42	Copy of 4B
8A	CK, Suleimaniye; NK	---	13:18	Word lists, speaker1: to 06:29; speaker2 (NK) rest of recording
8B	CK	---	15:59	Short academic text on the Kurdish language (90 secs.), from a radio programme? From 01:50: Miscell. literary narratives, with some gaps and breaks in the recording, transcription not identified
9A	CK	---	18:00	Beginning of the tape broken, repaired with tape, nevertheless good recording (Side B empty!). Origin uncertain; traditional narrative, transcription not identified